



# The MATHEMATICAL ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

1529 Eighteenth Street, N.W. ■ Washington, D.C. 20036 ■ Telephone (202) 387-5200

Alfred B. Willcox, *Executive Director*

September 14, 1988

Section Chairs  
Section Secretaries

Dear Colleagues:

At the Board of Governors meeting in Providence and again at the meeting of Section Officers, several persons expressed concern that the College Faculty Workshops supported by the National Science Foundation may be competing with some of our Section workshops and short courses. The NSF funding allows organizers of these workshops to pay a modest stipend to participants, in marked contrast with our Section workshops for which the participants pay a fee.

I should state that the evidence of significant competition is early and inconclusive, even though several Section workshops did, evidently, see a drop in applications this year. Furthermore, we certainly do not wish to criticize NSF for its College Faculty Enhancement Program, something we have been urging NSF to do for more than a decade.

This morning I visited Nina Roscher, the new NSF Program Director for Faculty Enhancement. We discussed this potential problem, or, rather, the challenge to NSF to support faculty enhancement without hurting the successful and self-supporting MAA Section short courses and workshops. Clearly, that is a goal of both NSF and MAA.

In a brief visit, we did not arrive at a long-term solution. However, I believe that NSF will be receptive to any reasonable program or project that we might suggest. However, we did identify one thing we could do that might help some of our sections strengthen your Faculty Short Course Programs, and that is the purpose of this letter.

I enclose a copy of the NSF Program Announcement for the Undergraduate Faculty Enhancement Program. Dr. Roscher stated that NSF would be glad to receive proposals from MAA Sections for grants designed to strengthen -- or start -- faculty short courses.

You should note several things:

1. Our (your) Section short courses are designed to become self-supporting from tuition fees after an initial period of implementation. It would be unfortunate if NSF support for a period caused these short courses

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to become so elaborate and so well-funded that they lost their ability to survive on their own. Such use of federal funds would be counterproductive. Nevertheless, it should be possible for some Sections to secure funding to start short courses when there had been none or to experiment with new modes that probably couldn't be supported entirely by fees at first.

2. Your section may not be able to apply for an NSF grant on its own. NSF looks for a known fiscal entity and may not consider that a typical MAA Section has the fiscal structure to qualify. (Don't misunderstand me; I said "structure", not "responsibility".) You may wish to ask the host institution to apply for a grant in the name of your section. That way you will be recognized as having received an NSF grant and the resulting workshop will still be a Section workshop.

I simply want to suggest to you that NSF may be able to help you with a Section short course. (Note that I use "short course" and "workshop" interchangeably.) This may not be the ultimate solution, and we will continue to discuss other ways in which NSF can help expand our Section Short Courses. But, perhaps this is worth pursuing.

Sincerely,



Alfred B. Willcox  
Executive Director

ABW/dm  
enclosure

cc: Ben Fusaro  
Don Small  
Marvin Brubaker